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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 001654

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TAGS: PGOV PREL OVIP JA

SUBJECT: LDP AND KOMEITO SECRETARIES GENERAL APPEAL FOR
HELP ARRANGING HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) During a March 29 courtesy call on the Ambassador, Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Takebe and Komeito Secretary General Fuyushiba requested the Ambassador's

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assistance in securing meetings with Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rice, Secretary Rumsfeld and the leaders of the

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Democratic and Republican parties during their April 5-7 U.S. visit. Asked for advice on what topics to raise during their trip, the Ambassador encouraged them to share their thoughts on Prime Minister Koizumi's successor, beef and coalition dynamics. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) During a March 29 courtesy call on the Ambassador, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe and Komeito Secretary General Tetsuzo Fuyushiba discussed their upcoming visit to the United States. Takebe shared that the ruling coalition had just passed the FY06 budget on March 27, freeing them to turn to other issues. Takebe has yet to visit the United States in his current capacity, and he and Fuyushiba are looking forward to the opportunity. Their current travel dates to Washington, D.C. are April 5-7.

Need to Bolster Ties

¶3. (C) Prime Minister Koizumi and the President enjoy a close friendship, but Koizumi will be stepping down this year, Takebe stated. Japanese politicians would like to reaffirm bilateral relations and strengthen their contacts with U.S. officials. The U.S.-Japan relationship has been great for the last 60 years, Takebe observed. Even when our alliance has been tested, we have always shared important commonalities such as baseball, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and our belief in freedom and democracy. The United States is considered the "sheriff of freedom and democracy," Takebe continued, and in the post-WWII era, Japan has learned the importance of democracy. Together, we faced down the Soviet Union threat, and now we are up against North Korea. China is trying to create hegemony in Asia, Takebe warned, and we should consider the U.S.-Japan Treaty when we think of China. Our relationship is broad and deep, and our parties and Diet must play a lead role, Takebe emphasized.

Travel Plans and Meeting Requests

¶4. (SBU) Takebe said he and Fuyushiba would like to meet with Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rice, Secretary Rumsfeld and the leaders of the Democratic and Republican

parties during their trip. Since his childhood he has been impressed by former President Lincoln and Takebe would like to visit Civil War battlefields, he shared. The Vietnam Memorial is also on his must-see list. The delegation will travel to Branson, Missouri, to see Shoji Tabuchi, a popular Japanese performer. Takebe -- who has already visited Branson twice and knows Tabuchi well -- and Koizumi agreed to give Tabuchi the Foreign Ministry Award for his role in fostering bilateral ties. Takebe, Fuyushiba and Japan's Ambassador to the United States Ryozo Kato will travel to Missouri to present the award to Tabuchi.

¶15. (C) The Ambassador welcomed their visit to the United States and assured the secretaries general that we will try to accommodate their requests. The Vice President will be out of town for two of the three days that Takebe and Fuyushiba are visiting, the Ambassador explained, which is a complicating factor. Nevertheless, everyone is well aware of the importance of the trip. The Ambassador assured them that Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Taro Aso had also appealed for help in securing their high-level meetings.

¶16. (C) Fuyushiba noted that the LDP and Komeito have been in coalition since 1999 and Takebe is the sixth LDP Secretary General with whom he has worked. Takebe has been in place now for one and a half years and Fuyushiba said he is looking forward to finally traveling together with him to the United States. He had visited the United States with then-Secretary General Abe in April 2004, Fuyushiba shared, and had had a great time. The Ambassador observed that when Abe traveled to the United States, he established such a high bar for high-level meetings that we are finding it hard to duplicate it for successor delegations.

Suggested Discussion Topics

¶17. (C) Now is an important time for U.S.-Japan relations, Takebe observed. Asked for advice on what to discuss while in the United States, the Ambassador encouraged the two leaders to share their view of possible successors to Koizumi and their assessments of various candidates. The beef issue remains a top priority and there is great interest in what is required to reopen the Japanese market. The Ambassador hinted that opinions on defense issues might differ between Komeito and the LDP and suggested they explain that dynamic to their interlocutors. The Ambassador clarified that no one would try to negotiate with them on these issues.

¶18. (SBU) Fuyushiba offered that there is little difference between Komeito and the LDP on defense issues. Together, they passed emergency laws and the Special Measures Law against terrorism and supported the Self-Defense Force dispatch to Afghanistan and Iraq. He and Takebe had traveled to Samawah and rode Black Hawk helicopters, a memorable experience, Fuyushiba observed. Takebe added that the coalition with Komeito has helped to form a consensus among the Japanese public on various issues. Before the coalition was established, it was not possible to even talk about revising the Constitution. Now, the coalition is considering a national referendum bill. Takebe and Fuyushiba thanked the Ambassador for his ideas, and for his help in arranging high-level meetings.

SCHIEFFER